

MEDICAL SERVICE CORPS (MSC) APPLICANT INFORMATION GUIDE



22 February 2010

Dear Applicant,

The Medical Service Corps (MSC) has more than 1,000 Air Force officers who serve as professional health care administrators throughout the world. MSCs work in various capacities in clinics, hospitals, major commands, Air Staff and the Department of Defense enabling health care providers to provide the highest quality health care for our patients. If you ask any MSC officer, you will find they believe they are in one of the best career fields in the Air Force.

We hope you find this guide useful and it answers any questions you might have about our corps. If you wish to learn even more about the Medical Service Corps, I encourage you to contact the Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) on an Air Force base near you and meet with the local MSC officers to discuss their roles. My point of contact for this guide is HQ AFPC/DPAMS, Medical Service Corps Utilization and Education Branch, at DSN 665-4094/commercial 210-565-4094 or via e-mail at afpc.dpams@randolph.af.mil. Please address all MSC accession questions to HQ AFPC/DPAMS.

Thank you for your interest in the United States Air Force Medical Service Corps!


DENISE K. LEW, Colonel, USAF, MSC, FACHE
Director, Medical Service Corps

TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction	2
Summary of Changes	3
Description of the Medical Service Corps	3
Career Development	3
Eligibility Criteria	5
Constructive Service Credit	7
Waivers	8
MSC Accession Board	8
Application Procedures	8
MSC Historical Board Statistics	11
Frequently Asked Questions	12
References	14

SUMMARY OF CHANGES

Recent changes to the 2010 MSC Guide include; included USAF/SG1 FY2010 Constructive Service Credit Policy for qualified & accredited graduate degrees (policy effective in CY 2010); established GRE/GMAT minimums; revised Education (Degree) Eligibility requirements; and clarified the waiver process.

Description of the Medical Service Corps

There are many opportunities to accomplish the Air Force mission and be successful as an MSC officer. The MSC encompasses command, administrative, logistical, and educational functions supporting the provision of health care to active duty service members and all other authorized Department of Defense beneficiaries during peacetime and contingencies. This includes planning, programming, and operations related to the following activities: medical facility command; medical facility administration; medical materiel and services management; medical resource management; health plan management; personnel administration (human resources); war and emergency planning; aeromedical evacuation; medical recruiting; medical facility repair, modification, and construction; biometrics; health systems design; data systems design; medical research administration; and health services training and education. Additionally, in most clinical settings, MSCs also direct the rigorous healthcare facility accreditation program and continuous process improvement program.

Career Development

Three concepts serve as a foundation for career development. First, your early years as a health services administrator are devoted to gaining core experience in two or more functional areas. Second, as you gain experience you will move from Military Treatment Facility (MTF) operational positions to staff or special duty assignments and then back to the MTF. Third, you will pursue the appropriate level of Professional Military Education (PME) and career path education and training. These concepts are included in three interrelated phases of the MSC Professional Development Program: initial, intermediate, and advanced (tactical, operational, and strategic). This development includes building MSC core competencies and leadership through multiple career broadening opportunities.

During the initial development phase (0-8 years), you are expected to manage at least three different MTF functional areas. Your supervisors evaluate your job performance as an indicator of your long-term potential as a MSC officer. As you gain experience, your supervisors strive to give you the opportunity to perform at levels commensurate with your abilities (specialized MSCs may be called upon to manage the same functional areas at increasing levels during this phase of their professional development). Senior administrators will have the unique opportunity and responsibility to identify and motivate highly qualified officers in this phase. Assignments in this initial

phase emphasize the development of technical expertise and stress the depth of experience in three or more functional areas.

The intermediate development phase (9-13 years) provides you the opportunity to further develop your skills as a health services administrator. Professional development occurs through assignment experiences, education, and training. Senior administrators continue to serve as your advisors and mentors in this phase. During your intermediate development years, you begin to transition from assignments which emphasize technical expertise (depth) to positions which call for oversight responsibility (breadth) of experience.

During the advanced development phase (14-20+ years), you should perform broad leadership and managerial assignments of all types, including command. Assignments in the advanced phase make use of your full potential as a senior health services administrator.

A professional health services administrator operates in a highly complex environment and needs continuing education and training. To enable you to reach your full potential, many educational and training opportunities are provided.

The education level required for appointment as an MSC is referenced in the "Eligibility Criteria" section of this guide.

MSC officers appointed from civilian status, without the benefit of previous military training, or who are commissioned from enlisted status, will attend a 4-week Commissioned Officer Training School (COTS), conducted at Maxwell AFB. While at COTS, you will perform a Physical Fitness Baseline (PFB) test and an official Physical Fitness Assessment (PFA). The PFB and PFA consist of aerobic fitness (1.5 mile run), muscular strength (push ups and crunches) and body composition. To calculate your requirements, review the USAF Fitness Charts in Air Force Instruction 10-248, Attachment 12 (<http://www.e-publishing.af.mil/shared/media/epubs/AFI10-248.pdf>). (Note: Effective 1 July 2010, AFI 10-248, *Fitness Program*, will be redesignated AFI 36-2905, *Fitness Program*) In addition, physical requirements include: exercise 5 days a week in rigorous, full-body aerobic and anaerobic programs, completing a 3 mile run, marching, running, lifting, climbing, calisthenics, 3-days of field conditions, and confidence/obstacle courses.

MSCs will complete the basic Health Services Administration (HSA) course. This course, conducted at Sheppard AFB, TX, provides new MSC officers with the knowledge needed to perform as an entry level department manager in an Air Force MTF. HSA is a 4-week course. Immediately following HSA, new MSC officers will also attend a 2-week course to cover material specific to the functional area which the student will be assigned after graduation.

Like other professional disciplines, the field of health services administration requires officers to increase their military expertise by completing Developmental Education (DE) at appropriate times throughout their career. The Air Force and the MSC strongly

recommend you complete Squadron Officer School (SOS), Air Command and Staff College (ACSC), and Air War College (AWC). Because of the limited number of spaces available, only a few MSCs are selected to attend a professional military school in residence. Officers who are not selected to attend DE in residence should complete courses by seminar or correspondence. You should complete SOS while you are a captain and before you compete in the primary zone for major. Similarly, officers should complete ACSC as a major, and AWC as a lieutenant colonel. Information about other PME equivalent courses may be obtained from your base education office.

During all phases of your professional development, you are given an opportunity to foster your professional growth by attending meetings, short courses, symposia, and other types of continuing education. Sponsored funded short courses provide new knowledge and new applications of old knowledge in the field of health services administration. The courses, conducted primarily by civilian educational institutions and professional societies, enable you to keep current in the profession. The Education and Training Course Announcement (ETCA) website (<https://rso.my.af.mil/etcacourses>) outlines continuing education requirements and provides information on many formal training courses that are available. Other educational opportunities include Extension Course Institute (ECI) and on-base university courses. You should consider enrolling in courses applicable to your specialty that will improve your duty performance and broaden your background.

One method of demonstrating professional competence is affiliation with or board certification through professional organizations. All MSC officers are encouraged to participate in organizations that complement or promote the goals of the Air Force, the MSC, and the individual. Certain organizations are identified as approved board certification granting bodies, based on selected criteria. Specific details on these organizations are posted on the MSC Utilization and Education Knowledge Junction on the AFMS Knowledge Exchange. These criterion include the successful passing of a written and oral examination, education and professional development resources, continuing education opportunities, and recertification mechanisms. Affiliation and advancement in these organizations are particularly encouraged. AFI 41-104, *Professional Board and National Certification Examinations*, provides for the reimbursement of the costs of one initial examination. Examples of these organizations include the American College of Healthcare Executives and the American Academy of Medical Administrators.

Eligibility Criteria for Application to the MSC

Number of Applications: Individuals will be allowed to meet two accession boards. To apply a third time, the Director of the Medical Service Corps must grant a waiver. Waivers will only be granted to meet the board for third time if something significant in your record would influence a change in the board's scoring.

Education: IAW AFI 36-2005, Chapter 7, the following qualifying degrees are acceptable for application into the MSC. Applicants desiring to apply to the MSC board must have a qualifying degree as specified below.

Graduate degrees: Health Care Administration (or equivalent), Hospital Administration (or equivalent), Health Services Administration (or equivalent), Health Administration, Public Administration, Business Administration, Business Management, Health Management and Policy, Information Systems Management, Computer Science, Finance, Accounting, Statistics, Marketing, Economics, or other closely-related equivalent as specified below.

Undergraduate degrees: Health Care Administration (or equivalent), Hospital Administration (or equivalent), Health Services Administration (or equivalent), Health Administration, Public Administration, Business Administration, Business Management, Health Management and Policy, Information Systems Management, Computer Science, Finance, Accounting, Statistics, Marketing, Economics, Clinical or Health Systems Engineering (or equivalent), Architecture, Operations Research or other closely-related degree as specified below. This includes undergraduate programs certified by the Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA).

Closely-related degrees: applicants may apply to the board with either a business-related degree appropriate to a healthcare environment or closely related to a healthcare/hospital administration degree. In order for the qualifying degree to be competitive it should contain the following five administrative courses: **finance, accounting, statistical analysis, marketing, and economics.**

All closely-related degrees are reviewed by the Chief, MSC Education and Utilization Branch and the Director, Medical Service Corps. Degrees lacking in any areas could be considered non-qualifying. To determine degree eligibility, forward a transcript/degree plan by e-mail to AFPC.DPAMS@Randolph.af.mil or fax to HQ AFPC/DPAMS, DSN 665-4240 or Comm (210) 565-4240.

Degree Completion Requirements: Applicants actively in a degree program may apply to the 2010 MSC Board based on the following conditions:

- 1) The degree meets the education requirements as outlined above
- 2) Applicant must be able to complete degree requirements by 1 Jun 2011
- 3) The academic institution must provide a degree completion letter verifying the anticipated completion date.

GMAT/GRE Scores: GMAT/GRE scores from an examination taken within the last five years are required for all applicants. The **minimum** scores are 800-GRE (verbal and quantitative) or 400-GMAT. Historically, GRE and GMAT scores of individuals selected for commissioning have been 1040 and 540 respectively. The question of why an individual with a master's degree needs these test scores often arises. The bottom line

is that the selection board evaluates and compares the quality of the masters/bachelors degree to the respective GRE or GMAT score.

Grade Point Average (GPA): The **desired** GPA for the qualifying degree is 3.0 or above.

Age: An individual **MUST** be able to serve 20 years of commissioned service before the 1st day of the month subsequent to their 62nd birthday.

Time in Service (TIS):

Requirement: Individuals with less than 8 years time-in-service (TIS) by 1 January 2011 are eligible to apply to the 2010 MSC Accession Board.

Waivers: Individuals with 8 or more years TIS, but less than 10 years by 1 January 2011 may also apply, but will require a waiver from the Director of the Medical Service Corps. There are no additional waivers for individuals with more than 10 years TIS.

Exception: First-time applicants who were non-selects from a previous MSC board and exceed the TIS waiver, may be considered for a second opportunity to meet the CY2010 board. Exceptions will be considered on a case-by-case basis, meeting the following criteria:

- 1.) The applicant's application must have significant improvement from the first time meeting the accession board.
- 2.) First-time applicants from AY 2009 and previous boards, must not exceed 12 years TIS as of 1 Jan 2011 and must submit a waiver (guidance on page 8).
- 3.) First-time applicants from the AY 2010 board with more than 10 years TIS must submit a waiver (guidance on page 8).

****Note:** After the AY2011 board, TIS waivers & exceptions will no longer be considered for application.

Constructive Service Credit

HQ USAF/SG1 Fiscal Year (FY) 2010 Constructive Service Credit Policy letter dated 27 Aug 2009 outlines constructive service credit requirements. Essentially, newly accessed MSC officers will be awarded 2 years of constructive service credit only for qualifying master's degrees accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Management Education (CAHME) or the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB). The master's degree course work must be completed prior to the individual's oath of office for constructive service credit to be granted. While the diploma does not have to be issued prior to the oath, the letter on college/university letterhead must reflect degree completion as of the day of or any day prior to the administration of the member's oath into the USAF MSC. Any other constructive

service credit will be assessed based on civilian work experience in the healthcare administration field (focusing on MSC core competencies) IAW AFI 36-2005, para 2.18. The Constructive Credit evaluation is required to be completed prior to taking the Oath of Office, and must be approved by HQ AFPC/DPAMS.

Waivers

Throughout the application process, there may be instances when a waiver may be required. Except as indicated below, all waivers must be initiated by the applicant and submitted to HQ AFPC/DPAMS for consideration. The waiver request must be in memo format and must specifically address (1) why the waiver is required and (2) the reason(s) the waiver should be granted. Justification should be from the standpoint of “best interest of the AF Medical Service Corps” and not the best interests of the member. An MSC Colonel Interview should not be conducted without advanced approval of the waiver, except as indicated below.

Qualified applicants with more than 8 years and less than 10 years TIS will proceed with the application process and schedule the interview accordingly. The interviewing MSC Colonel initiates the waiver process during the interview and is included in the interviewer’s assessment. The interviewer forwards the interview assessment including the waiver recommendation directly to HQ AFPC or HQ AFRS respectively.

Third-time applicants must clearly demonstrate significant improvement from previous applications. If the member’s record neglects significant improvement, the interviewer should notify the applicant and terminate the application process. Waivers for board consideration will be documented on the interview assessment and forwarded directly to HQ AFPC/HQ AFRS respectively by the interviewer.

(Note: All waiver requests, whether from the interviewer or applicant, will be forwarded to the MSC Director for application consideration.)

MSC Accession Board

The MSC Accession Board selects qualified applicants from military and civilian sources for commissioning in the USAF. This board is held annually, normally in October, with three senior MSC officers appointed as board members. Board members determine the applicant's potential to serve as a military officer and healthcare professional using the “whole person concept” in addition to demonstrated performance, and leadership qualities. Additional boards may be scheduled if the yearly accession goal is not met at the initial accession board.

Tentative dates for the AY2011 Accession Board: 25 Oct – 28 Oct 2010

Application Procedures

To obtain an application, you must first fill out the USAF MSC Application Questionnaire located on the MSC Homepage. Once complete, return it by either fax (210-565-4240, DSN 665-4240) or e-mail (AFPC.DPAMS1@randolph.af.mil). The questionnaire is used to verify whether you qualify to meet the board. For eligible members, an application will be e-mailed directly to you. Ineligible applicants will be notified via e-mail and provided with justification. In both instances, if additional information is required, the applicant will be contacted. Applications are due Not Later Than (NLT) 24 Sep 2010.

Key concerns for applicants married to military members: IAW AFI 36-2110, para A8.1., "military couples should not make decisions on future service, career development, or family planning based on the assumption they will always be assigned to the same location or join spouse assignment is guaranteed." Applicants married to another military member must be fully aware that acceptance to the MSC commissioning program may potentially affect joint residence to the military couple. In addition, military couples assigned OCONUS must also understand that DEROS curtailments, if applicable, are not guaranteed. DEROS curtailments will be considered, however, the military spouse of an accepted applicant may be required to complete the full-prescribed overseas tour without their spouse.

Civilian applicants apply through an Air Force Health Professions Recruiter. The recruiter submits the application package and arranges for the Colonel's interview.

Enlisted applicants request application packages from HQ AFPC/DPAMS via the MSC Homepage.

Officers (Line and Non-MSC) must provide a Release Statement prior to beginning the application process IAW AFI 36-2106, Competitive Category Transfer. This letter indicates the officer will be released from the career field if selected for the Medical Service Corps (***Any individual that does not have the appropriate release will not be allowed to have his/her package meet the accession board. Many times, it is not possible to obtain release because of active duty service commitment and/or manning in the career field***). If this release is denied, or not completed, the application cannot be processed. **Active duty officers must complete a Competitive Category Transfer package in addition to the MSC application.** In order to ensure applicants are qualified to meet the board (education and release requirements met), please call HQ AFPC/DPAMS directly at DSN 665-4094.

USAF Academy and ROTC applicants will receive an annual message advising cadre and students of application procedures and deadlines.

Active duty officer applicants from other services must submit applications through their respective Service using the guidelines of that Service. If approved, the parent Service will submit applications to HQ AFPC/DPPAOO, DSN 665-3711.

Enlisted applicants from other uniformed services must have a discharge order in hand (DD Form 214) and can apply through their local Air Force Health Professions Recruiter and Air Force Recruiting Service.

Reservists from any service and National Guardsmen will apply through their local Air Force Health Professions Recruiter and Air Force Recruiting Service. A conditional release statement from the affiliated Service is required for application.



Historical MSC Accession Boards

	AY03	AY04	AY05	AY06	AY07	AY08	AY09	AY10
# Applied	203	153	260	163	167	185	169	150
# Selected	98	79	77	69	70	71	70	70
Select Rate	48%	52%	30%	42%	42%	38%	41%	47%
GRE	978	1040	1079	1029	1039	1041	1024	1051
GMAT	552	537	514	541	531	558	569	544
GPA	3.5	3.5	3.6	3.5	3.6	3.6	3.5	3.6
Interview Score	9.5	9.5	9.6	9.6	9.5	9.6	9.4	9.5
Adv. Degree	62%	49%	61%	64%	57%	58%	44%	59%
Time in Service	7.5	8.9	6.3	6.7	7.3	**4.4	4.3 (7.1)	3.9 (7.1)

Right Person, Right Place, Right Time

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. My degree is in Business Administration and would like to meet the Oct 2010 board but my degree is not yet complete. Can I still apply for the board?

A1. If you are currently pursuing a degree, the degree must be awarded by Jun 2011 in order to meet the Oct 10 board. Your academic institution will provide you with a degree completion letter verifying degree requirements to include an anticipated completion date. In addition, the degree must be reviewed by AFPC/DPAMS to ensure it meets the education eligibility criteria.

Q2. I have a low GRE/GMAT score; can I still apply for the board although I don't meet the minimum scores?

A2. If you do not meet the minimum requirements, you are not eligible to apply to the MSC board. If your scores are lower than the established minimums, it is highly recommended to re-take the exam to meet the established minimum requirements.

Q3. If I am selected by the board, when is the earliest I can depart for Commissioned Officer Training (COT)?

A3. COT designation is determined by availability and degree requirements. Selects that already have a completed degree and are otherwise eligible to attend training will be projected into the first class (January). All other selects will be assigned a COT class based on eligibility and when degree requirements will be met.

Q4. How do I schedule my Senior MSC interview?

A4. Each applicant is responsible for scheduling an interview with an MSC 0-6. To locate the nearest MSC 0-6 in your area, please contact AFPC/DPAMS at DSN 664-4094, Comm: 210-565-4094, option 3.

Q5. What are the time-on-station (TOS) requirements for the MSC Accession Program?

A5. There are no time-on-station requirements for application to the MSC Accession Program. As part of the commissioning process for enlisted active duty, selects are separated from enlisted status and then EAD (Extended Active Duty) to commission status. (Please see additional information in Q7)

Q6. How do I apply for the MSC Board if I'm already an officer on active duty?

A6. First, you must fill out the questionnaire and provide either a degree plan or copy of your degree certificate. The degree must meet the education criteria and you must meet time-in-service (TIS) requirements in order to be eligible. In addition, you must formally request release from your current Air Force Specialty (AFS) through the

Competitive Category Transfer (CCT) process. Officers must provide a release statement from their respective AFPC assignment officer, submit a letter requesting the CCT into the MSC, and meet minimum TAFMSD requirements to transfer. Refer to AFI 36-2106 for additional guidance on the CCT process.

Q7. If I am join-spouse, how will acceptance into the MSC affect my spouse?

A7. As with any career-impacting decision, military couples should be reminded not to make decisions on future service, career development, or family planning based on the assumption they will always be assigned to the same location or join spouse is guaranteed. Efforts are made by AFPC assignment functionals to accommodate join spouse assignments, however due to AF manning and utilization, join spouse is not always possible. In addition, Time-on-Station requirements for military spouses are not automatically waived. Each military member serves in his/her own right and may be required to complete their entire prescribed tour, regardless of spouse's selection status.

Q8. How do I know if my degree qualifies for application to the MSC Board?

A8. The 2010 MSC Guide provides qualifying degree information at the graduate and undergraduate level. The guide also provides guidance on qualifying under the "closely-related" degree. Refer to the education requirements for additional guidance.

Q9. If I am currently a Reserve MSC and would like to become an active duty MSC officer, what action do I need to take?

A9. Reserve officers, regardless of AFS, will apply through Headquarters Air Force Recruiting Service (HQ AFRS). The officer must meet degree eligibility and TIS requirements. In addition, they must also apply to the MSC board and if selected, will be transferred to active duty status based on the effective date of release by their respective Reserve Commander. Keep in mind the transfer is not an automatic transaction upon acceptance to the Corps. The conditional release date must be in the accession year and a valid AF requirement must exist in order to bring member onto active duty. Interested applicants should contact a Health Professions recruiter in their area for additional application guidance.

Q. 10. What action do I take if I require a waiver?

A. 10. If the waiver is for TIS or third-time application to the MSC board, then there is no action for the applicant to take. The interviewing MSC Colonel initiates waiver requests for the accession board. The waiver is included in the interviewer's assessment. All other waiver requests require action on behalf of the member. Refer to the Waiver section of the guide for additional details.

REFERENCES

AFIs and Policy Letters for MSC Officer Accessions

AFI 36-2005 Appointment In Commissioned Grades and Designation and Assignment in Professional Categories -- Reserve of the Air Force and United States Air Force

- Outlines accession procedures for Medical Service Officers

AFI 36-2008 Voluntary Extended Active Duty (EAD) for Air Reserve Commissioned Officers

- Gives guidance on requirements and eligibility criteria for Medical Service Officers

AFI 36-2101 Classifying Military Personnel (Officers and Airmen)

- Discusses the mechanisms for classifying Medical Service Officers
- Provides job descriptions for each Air Force Specialty Code (AFSC)

AFI 36-2106 Competitive Category Transfers

- Provides guidance for active duty officers wishing to transfer to the Medical Service

AFI 36-2610 Appointing Regular Air Force Officers and Obtaining Conditional Reserve Status

- Describes the procedures for applying for changes in career officer status

AFI 36-2301 Professional Military Education

- Reviews PME for officers

USAF/SG1 Policy Letter, 27 Aug 2009

- Provides guidance on Constructive Service Credit for newly accessed MSC officers.

Other Sources of Information:

The Commission on Accreditation of Health Management Education (CAHME)
(<http://www.cahme.org/>)

The Association of University Programs in Health Administration (AUPHA)
(<http://www.aupha.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=1>)

Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB)

(<http://www.aacsb.edu/>)

MSC Education and Utilization Knowledge Junction on AFMS Knowledge Exchange

(<https://kx.afms.mil/kxweb/dotmil/kj.do?functionalArea=AFMSCUtilizationEd>)